

Report on the State of American Education Shows High School Students Taking More Advanced Coursework

High school students in the United States are taking more courses in mathematics and science, as well as social studies, the arts, and foreign languages, according to *The Condition of Education 2007* report released today by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The general increases in credits earned since the early 1980s are, in large part, a product of more graduates taking more advanced courses.

"The recent emphasis on mathematics and science in the high school curriculum has raised some concerns that growth in these and other high priority subject areas has squeezed out courses in other areas, such as the arts and history," said Mark Schneider, NCES Commissioner. "We have not found this to be the case. In fact, credits earned in other subjects have increased at the same time."

The Condition of Education is a congressionally mandated report that provides an annual statistical portrait of education in the United States. The 48 indicators included in the report cover all aspects of education, from student achievement to school environment and from early childhood through postsecondary education.

The report shows that enrollment in U.S. public schools is becoming increasingly diverse. In addition, more individuals are enrolling in postsecondary education, and more bachelor's degrees have been awarded than in the past. Among the report's other findings:

High School Coursetaking

- The average number of credits earned by high school graduates increased from 21.7 credits in 1982 to 25.8 credits in 2004.
- Comparing 1982 and 2004, graduates earned an average of 4.0 versus 4.3 credits in English, 2.7 versus 3.6 credits in mathematics, and 2.2 versus 3.2 credits in science.
- These increases in credits earned in English, mathematics, and science have not coincided with a decline in other coursework. Comparing 1982 and 2004, graduates earned an average of 3.2 versus 3.9 credits in history/social studies, 1.1 versus 2.0 credits in foreign languages, and 1.4 versus 2.1 in arts.
- Between 1997 and 2005, the number of students taking AP exams more than doubled to about 1.2 million, with the numbers of Blacks and Hispanics growing faster than those for other racial/ethnic groups.
 - The percentage of exams resulting in a qualifying score of 3.0 or better decreased from 65 percent in 1997 to 59 percent in 2005.
- In 2004, Asian/Pacific Islander graduates were more likely than graduates of any other race/ethnicity to have completed advanced coursework in science, mathematics, English, and foreign language.

- Students who eventually dropped out of high school were behind their peers who graduated on time in the total number of credits they earned in their freshman and sophomore years, as well as the amount they earned in English, mathematics, and science courses. Year-to-year change shows that credit accrual declined for dropouts, putting them further behind.

America's Students Today

- Minority students make up 42 percent of public school enrollment.
- Twenty percent of school-age children speak a language other than English at home.
- The rate of college enrollment immediately after high school increased from 49 percent in 1972 to 69 percent in 2005.
- Female college enrollment passed male enrollment in 1978. The gender gap has since widened and is expected to continue to grow.

Learner Outcomes

- About three-quarters of the freshman class graduated from public high schools on time in 2003–04.
- The number of bachelor's degrees awarded increased by 33 percent between 1989-90 and 2003-04, while the number of associate's degrees increased by 46 percent. Minority students have accounted for about half of the growth in associate's and bachelor's degrees.
- Adults ages 25–34 with a bachelor's degree or higher have higher median earnings than their peers with less education, and these earnings differences increased from 1980 to 2005.
- The average total price for 1 year of full-time graduate education ranged from \$21,900 for a master's degree program to \$41,900 for a first-professional degree program.

NCES is the statistical center of the Institute of Education Sciences in the U.S. Department of Education. The full text of *The Condition of Education 2007* (in HTML format), along with related data tables and indicators from previous years, can be viewed at <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe>.